

and are not eligible for any price preference or relaxation of standards.

Impact of international oil price hike on balance of trade and BOP

1630. SHRI R.P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) what has been the impact of oil price hike in the international market on our balance of trade and balance of payment;

(b) how do Government propose to finance the additional deficit; and

(c) what steps Government are taking to reduce imports by increasing domestic production of oil?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) to (b) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

(c) Steps have been taken to increase crude oil production in the country through application of improved technologies, development of new fields, additional development of existing fields and by inviting foreign and private capital in the upstream sector. Steps have also been taken to increase refining capacity by expansion of existing refineries in public sector and setting up of refineries in joint sector and private sector.

Filling up of reserved posts for SCs and STs

1631. SHRIMATI BASANTI SARMA: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the details of various posts reserved for SCs and STs lying vacant in his Ministry and its subordinate offices for the last five years and till date, category-wise;

(b) the necessary action being taken or proposed to be taken by Government to fill them up; and

(c) the time by which the above vacancies are likely to be filled up?